

**American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division**  
*The Affiliate*

## **“Touch 10,000” Program Launch Readied for 2010**

*By Eric A. Koester*

With the focus of the ABA’s 2009–2010 bar year squarely on membership initiatives, the ABA YLD continues to lead the way. Spring 2010 will mark the formal launch of the “Touch 10,000” membership program, described by Mark O’Hallohan, the National Conferences Coordinator and former Membership Board member, as the “most important new initiative in the entire ABA.”

### **A Broken Pipeline**

One of the key problems with the ABA’s membership recruitment process is that the bulk of the responsibility falls on mailings and e-mail communications from the ABA rather than from ABA members. This reality led to the creation of the “Touch 10,000 Program.”

“There must be a fundamental change in the way we bring in our new members,” said former Membership Director Michael Pellicciotti. “Every year, we welcome 50,000 new bar admittees with a free year of membership in the ABA hoping that they see the value of it and become dues-paying members for life. We found that the problem is most new bar admittees don’t even know they have this free membership.”

Under former ABA YLD Chair Justin Goldstein, the ABA YLD Membership Board analyzed membership issues for young lawyers and presented a summary of their findings. The report showcased the stark realities of the rapidly decreasing “conversion” of free members into dues paying members. Although some lawyers join the ABA after a few years of practice, the vast majority of ABA members start with the ABA after passing the bar and retain their membership throughout their careers. In the past fifteen years, fewer lawyers have become dues paying members initially, leading to fewer lawyer-members after ten years of practice. The net result is the ABA was looking at a shrinking base of young lawyers for the future.

The membership report highlighted a central issue: young lawyers were not being encouraged by other members to join the ABA.

### **What Is Touch 10,000 and What Are Its Aims?**

Touch 10,000 is a member-to-member outreach program designed to connect current ABA young lawyer members (Ambassadors) with New Bar Admittees (NBAs). The Touch 10,000 name comes from the goal of the program to personally connect with 10,000 NBAs each year. The aim of Touch 10,000 is to put young lawyer leaders in touch with NBAs—to inform them about their free membership, to welcome them into the ABA, and to provide a personal voice to the ABA’s 150,000 young lawyer members. This program is designed to ensure that NBAs are personally contacted by Ambassadors who will explain the vital function that the ABA serves in the legal community as well as the many opportunities present in the ABA YLD.

### **How the Program Works**

“We are matching up approximately 500 young lawyer ABA leaders and volunteers with nearly 10,000 NBAs annually,” said Touch 10,000 coordinator Emily Masalski. “Two to three times a year, each Ambassador will receive a list of recent graduates. The Ambassador will first contact their NBAs with a personal e-mail and then follow up with a telephone call shortly thereafter. The goal is for our Ambassadors to share their ABA experiences, answer any questions, and serve as a valuable source for the Association’s newest members.”

Coordinating 500 young lawyer volunteers is a large undertaking and the program also relies on a network of State Coordinators to help with the effort. Regional Coordinators (and Membership Board Members) will help to select and train volunteer coordinators in each state and territory. The State Coordinators will become an important resource in each state for membership initiatives. The Regional Coordinators are looking for State Coordinators and if anyone knows of any individuals looking for a leadership opportunity, please have them contact Bill Stanton at [stantonw@staff.abanet.org](mailto:stantonw@staff.abanet.org) who will pass those recommendations along.

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### How Can You Help?

We still need your help. Below are ways you can be involved:

- *Become an Ambassador:* If you are not a leader in the ABA YLD but would like to participate as an Ambassador, visit [www.abanet.org/yld/touch10k](http://www.abanet.org/yld/touch10k) and sign up. It takes only about an hour of your time to connect with ten NBAs, and it can be a great opportunity to connect with new bar admittees.
- *Encourage Others to Become Ambassadors:* Encourage them to visit [www.abanet.org/yld/touch10k](http://www.abanet.org/yld/touch10k) and sign up to be an Ambassador.

The Membership Board will be looking for ways to recognize those individuals and states that are taking an active role in the Touch 10,000 Program. We have a recognition program in place and are actively working with the ABA Membership and Marketing staff to serve the NBAs through the Touch 10,000 program.

For more information, visit the Touch 10,000 page at [www.abanet.org/yld/touch10k](http://www.abanet.org/yld/touch10k).

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